
Open Space Plan 2008-2014

Section 7

Analysis of Needs

**Section 7.2.9 Community Open
Space & Recreation
JAMAICA PLAIN/
MISSION HILL**

Section 7.2.9

Community Open Space & Recreation

JAMAICA PLAIN/MISSION HILL

THE SETTING

The neighborhood of Mission Hill is included within the BRA-designated Jamaica Plain planning district. Primarily located west of Stony Brook, both were once part of the Town of Roxbury.

History

Jamaica Plain

The secession of West Roxbury from the Town of Roxbury in 1851 included Jamaica Plain in the new town. In fact, what we now know as Jamaica Plain was the most urbanized area of the Town of West Roxbury. The village had developed along its earliest major streets, Centre Street and Washington Street (originally the Norfolk and Bristol Turnpike, opened in 1803). In the latter half of the 18th century, wealthy citizens built summer estates – such as Commodore Joshua Loring’s 1760 house on Centre Street – in what was even then known as scenic Jamaica Plain. Jamaica Pond was the major water source for Boston from 1795 to 1845.

The wholly bucolic character of Jamaica Plain began to change in 1834 when the Boston and Providence Railroad was built through the Stony Brook Valley. The combination of the Stony Brook’s water power and improved transportation access brought industrial development. Cottages for workers were built. Commuters to Boston were now able to live in Jamaica Plain on the farms and estates subdivided for housing. By 1873, West Roxbury had voted to annex itself to Boston. With the extension of streetcar service from Roxbury to West Roxbury along Centre and Washington Streets after 1890, less affluent middle class commuters moved in, accelerating the subdivision of large tracts and tying the village’s fate further to that of Boston.

Jamaica Plain was less intensively developed than Roxbury and most of Dorchester. Its most intensively developed districts were in the area of Centre Street, Green Street, the Boston and Providence Railroad in the Stony Brook Valley, and the area near Franklin Park at Egleston Square. Triple-deckers were built near the Roxbury line, at Forest Hills, near Hyde and Egleston Squares, and in the manufacturing districts along the Stony Brook Valley. Elsewhere, single- and two-family detached houses predominated. The

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commercialization of Centre Street supported residential growth, as did the electrification of streetcars beginning about 1890.

With the decrease in rural character in the mid-1800s, open space began to emerge as a means to help maintain the community's desirable qualities. Even before the development of a formal park system, open space was developed. Forest Hills Cemetery, a rural cemetery modeled on Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, was consecrated in 1848. Benjamin Bussey gave 250 acres to Harvard University in 1842 for what became the Arnold Arboretum. Olmsted later designed the Arboretum to fit with the pastoral landscape style of the other Emerald Necklace parks.

When the Parks Department was established in 1875, its first report a year later identified Jamaica Pond as a key feature in parks for Boston. Jamaica Pond was landscaped between 1894 and 1898. Other scenic lands of this area were preserved and incorporated into the system now known as the Emerald Necklace, providing an escape from the urban pressures of late 19th century.

Three distinct types of housing were built after 1940 that reflect Jamaica Plain's residential character: suburban houses along the curving streets of Moss Hill (subdivided beginning in the 1920s), public housing on Heath Street (1941) and Centre Street (1954), and a luxury high rise tower on the Jamaica way (1964). The public housing developments included two playgrounds.

With the completion of the new MBTA Orange Line in 1987, the opening of the Southwest Corridor Park (27 acres in Jamaica Plain), and the reinvestment represented by new homebuyers of houses and condominium conversions, Jamaica Plain in the 1980s became a very desirable neighborhood in which to live. Open space, mass transit access, and relatively low-scaled tree-lined residential streets continued to attract new residents in the 1990s through to the current decade, but has put pressure on long-time lower-income and elderly residents to match the housing prices generated by the new demand. Yet the ethnic, economic, and lifestyle mix of people, many with a strong sense of community, has continued to make Jamaica Plain one of Boston's most vibrant neighborhoods.

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Mission Hill

Mission Hill developed as part of the town of Roxbury. During the 1700s, the Parker Hill area was divided into large estates; its name derives from the property of John Parker. Heath Street is named for another original property owner. By the early 1800s, streets encircled lower Parker Hill; houses and farms had proliferated, and many still belonged to the area's early families. Development was dense in the Parker/Tremont Street area. Industry along Stony Brook included dye works and the largest concentration of breweries in Boston.

In the 19th century, the Mission Hill neighborhood gained much of the character and form it retains today during a period which brought rapid growth to Roxbury. Part of lower Parker Hill was laid out with subdivisions before the Civil War. The neighborhood became firmly defined after the Civil War with the annexation of Roxbury by Boston in 1867 and the establishment of the Mission Church on Tremont Street, completed in 1878. The extension of streetcar and sewage service in the period from 1860 to 1880 increased development and population in this area. A new building boom occurred in the 1885 to 1895 period, primarily low-cost wood frame houses.

Today, Mission Hill's residential streetscapes are set among large institutions. This "strange bedfellowship" accelerated after 1900. Institutions began to move from cramped downtown locations to this area where low-priced vacant land and public transit accessibility matched their need for larger facilities. The New England Baptist Hospital has been located on top of Parker Hill since 1895 and its present-day Old Main building was constructed in 1924. The Robert B. Brigham Hospital was built in 1914.

The Wentworth Institute of Technology was built in 1916 on a site formerly occupied by cordage works. The Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral of New England was built in 1923.

Mission Hill has seen several large-scale residential developments in the 20th century: the Mission Main and Mission Extension BHA public housing projects; the Whitney Redevelopment Project, which includes the Charlesbank Apartments, Back Bay Manor, and Franklin Square Apartments; Mission Park, a publicly-subsidized mixed-income project near the Riverway and Huntington Avenue; and the Back of the Hill Development, sponsored by the Boston Bricklayers Union.

Needs Analysis

Demographics/Housing

Except where noted in the Mission Hill section below, the Demographics/Housing discussion for Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill uses Census figures for the BRA-designated Jamaica Plain planning district, which includes Mission Hill.

There has been a turnaround in the major demographic trend of population loss in Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill. The 1960, 1970, and 1980 censuses each showed a declining population. But the 1990 census showed a population increase over the 1980 figure, an increase even greater proportionally than for the city as a whole: 4.23% versus 2.01%. Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill's improved mass transit access (the then-new Orange Line), attractive housing stock, and abundant open space may help explain that population increase.

The year 2000 Census figure for the Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill planning district population, 38,074, represents a significant decline of 7.13%. However, much if not all of this decline may be explained by the temporary displacement of the population of the Mission Main public housing development in Mission Hill during the total reconstruction of the development that occurred at the time of the 2000 Census.

Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill generally mirrors the city as a whole in terms of age distribution, with the biggest difference in the 25 to 44 age range: 39% for Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill versus 36% for the city.

The racial and ethnic mix of people in Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill is diverse. It has the second largest Hispanic community in Boston: 23% of its population is Hispanic (Latino). While 2000 Census figures show a decrease in black and Hispanic persons as against 1990 figures, this is likely due again to the temporary displacement of the population of the Mission Main public housing development cited above.

Household composition in Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill is also mixed and varied. It has a generally similar average household size compared to Boston, except for non-family households, where the figure of 1.58 is larger than the 1.39 figure for Boston. The percentage of persons in non-family household is 36% versus 29% for Boston. Household growth jumped from a 5% increase in 1980-1990 to 10% in 1990-2000.

Demographic and Housing Profile

Population	
2000 Census	38,074
1990 Census	40,995
1980 Census	39,331
Population growth/decline, 1990 - 2000	-7.13%
Population growth/decline, 1980 - 1990	4.23%

Age		
0 to 4	1,751	5%
5 to 9	1,854	5%
10 to 14	1,849	5%
15 to 17	1,255	3%
18 to 24	5,218	14%
25 to 44	14,946	39%
45 to 64	7,115	19%
65 to 74	1,925	5%
75 to 84	1,481	4%
85 and over	680	2%

Race		% of Total Population
White alone		59%
Black or African American alone		18%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone		1%
Asian alone		7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone		0%
Some other race alone		12%
Two or more races		4%

Latino Status		% of Total Population
Not Hispanic or Latino		77%
Hispanic or Latino		23%

N.B.: "0%" means "less than 1%"

Demographic and Housing Profile

Households	
2000 Census	15,694
1990 Census	14,238
1980 Census	13,521
Household Growth/Decline, 1980-1990	5.30%
Household Growth/Decline, 1990-2000	10.23%

Population by Household Type

	% Persons
Family households	59%
Non-family households	36%
Group quarters	5%

Average Household Size

	Persons per Household Type
All Households	2.31
Family Households	3.21
Nonfamily Households	1.58

Persons Per Household

	Households	%
1-person households	5,327	34%
2-person households	5,116	33%
3-person households	2,456	16%
4-person households	1,511	10%
5-person households	797	5%
6-person households	278	2%
7-or more person households	209	1%

Demographic and Housing Profile

Population Density	
	Persons per Square Mile
1980 Census	12,811.4
1990 Census	13,353.4
2000 Census	12,402.0
Density Change 1980 to 1990	542.0
Density Change 1990 to 2000	-951.5

Housing Tenure in Occupied Housing Units	
	% in Occupied Housing Units
Owner occupied	32%
Renter occupied	68%

Total Occupied & Vacant Housing Units in Structure	
Single units	15%
Double units	14%
3-9 units	42%
10-19 units	9%
20-49 units	8%
50 or more units	12%
All other	0%
Single/Multiple Unit Ratio	0.2

Household by Number of Vehicles Available	
No vehicles	30%
1 vehicle	47%
2 vehicles	19%
3 or more vehicles	3%

Median Household Income
\$41,524

Civilian Unemployment Rate
5.5%

Poverty Rate
20.9%

Needs Analysis

The poverty rate mirrors the citywide number, while the median income level is higher than the citywide figure (\$41,524 versus \$39,629). Unemployment was lower, 5.5% versus 7.2% for Boston.

The population density for Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill in the 1990-2000 period decreased, again likely due to the evacuation of the Mission Main public housing development during the 2000 census count period.

Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill has a varied housing stock – smaller multi-family apartment buildings, triple-deckers, one- and two-family homes of both historic and contemporary suburban character, a luxury high-rise apartment tower, luxury multi-family condominium complexes, and large public housing developments. Many buildable lots have been filled in with new housing during the 1990s and into the first decade of the 21st century. Almost 70% of the dwelling units are renter-occupied.

Finally, the number of Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill households owning no motor vehicles is 30%, a lower percentage than for Boston (35%).

Mission Hill

Although Mission Church originally served as a German parish, soon Irish immigrants moved in to take advantage of affordable housing and nearby jobs. The growing brewery industry continued to be owned by German immigrant families. More streets were developed on lower Parker Hill, lined by brick single-family rowhouses. Streets on the upper part of the hill were laid out in the 1880s. Triple-deckers were added in the 1890s, as were apartment blocks built along Tremont Street and brick bowfront apartments lining Huntington Avenue. In the early 20th century, two-family houses filled in vacant areas. The neighborhood fabric generally retains a cohesive Victorian and Edwardian feeling, although public housing and high-rise apartments were added during and after World War II. Most of the back (southern part) of Mission Hill has 1980s housing – infill housing to replace triple deckers destroyed earlier in anticipation of institutional expansions that did not materialize – that echoes the scale of the South Huntington Avenue rowhouses.

Needs Analysis

Mission Hill today is very culturally diversified. A sizable Hispanic community has joined the longstanding Irish population. Many other groups contribute to the ethnic tapestry of the neighborhood, including Italians, African-Americans, Asians, and a sizable number of Somalian families. Mission Hill has families with children, young professionals, an elderly population, students, and hospital/medical area workers.

The strong economy during the 1980s and 1990s, and on into the first decade of the 21st century, has led to a strong reinvestment in existing private housing. This has been reinforced by the wholesale rehabilitation that has taken place at the Mission Main BHA public housing development, from a stark brick-faced complex to a more small-scaled residential grouping of peak-roofed wood frame houses and a residential-style grid of streets, with a network of open spaces.

Needs Analysis

THE OPEN SPACE SYSTEM TODAY*Equity and Investment*

Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill has a total of 543 acres in its open space inventory of parks, playgrounds, squares, community gardens and malls, 411 of which are protected. Blessed with a great variety and quality of open spaces, Jamaica Plain has an open space ratio of 10.79 acres per thousand persons, well above the city ratio of 7.47.

Because of the higher density of this neighborhood, Mission Hill's residents have a more limited amount of open space than Jamaica Plain as a whole, when considering only neighborhood playgrounds, community gardens, and urban wilds. There is a need for improved access to the Emerald Necklace parks, given their proximity, yet institutional land owners and the Jamaicaway traffic serve as barriers. In addition, access to and protection of urban wilds and institutional open space – such as the Harvard Quarry Urban Wild (now the Kevin Fitzgerald Park) and the Parker Hilltop owned by New England Baptist Hospital (but protected by a conservation restriction) – can add significantly to the community's open space resources.

The City of Boston invested over \$4.5 million in improving its extensive park and recreation facilities in Jamaica Plain (see table). Playgrounds like Parkman, Mission Hill, Jefferson, and McLaughlin, and regional facilities such as Jamaica Pond Park and the English High School Athletic Fields have been rehabilitated as a result of the city's capital improvement program.

Jamaica Plain Capital Projects 2001-2006	
English High School Athletic Fields	\$1,715,913
Forbes Street Playground	\$285,128
Jamaica Pond Park	\$59,456
Jefferson Playground	\$622,300
McLaughlin Playground	\$617,800
Mission Hill Playground	\$744,739
Murphy Playground	\$50,000
Parkman Playground	\$416,087
Total	\$4,511,424

Brookline



Open Space Types

Malls, Squares & Plazas	Community Gardens
Parkways, Reservations & Beaches	Urban Wilds & Natural Areas
Parks, Playgrounds & Athletic Fields	Protected Open Space
Cemeteries & Burying Grounds	Planning District

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 Miles

Site Name	Baseball Diamond	Softball Diamond	Little League Diamond	Football	Soccer	Cricket Field	Rugby	Lacrosse	Multi-Use Athletic Field	Basketball Court	Basketball Half Court	Tennis Court	Street Hockey Court	Volleyball	Handball	Horseshoes	Children's Play/ot	Waterspray Feature	Passive Area	Community Garden	Artwork/Monument	Path	Nature Trail	Landscaped Area	Fountain	Concession(s)	Parking Area	Other Features/Facilities	
Parkman Memorial																				X	X							Wooded Tract	
Parley Vale Preserve																												Wooded Tract behind 60 Paul Gore St Garden	
Paul Gore Street Playground																													
Paul Gore/Beecher Street Garden																			1										
Perkins Street																													
Riverway																			1		X		X						
Rock Hill																													
Rossmore/Stedman Park																			1										
Round Hill Street Garden																				1									
Showa												2																	
Soldier's Monument																					1								
South Street BHA Community Garden																							X						
South Street Community Garden																				1									
South Street Courts												2																	
South Street Mall																			1										
South Street Tract																			1		X		X					Wooded Tract (Arnold Arboretum)	
Southwest Corridor Community Farm																			1										
St Rose Street Garden																			1										
Starr Lane Park																			1										
Tobin Community Center Garden																				1									
Walden Street Community Garden																													
Williams Street I																												Wooded Tract	
Williams Street II																													
Williams Street III																												Wooded Tract	
Willow Pond Meadow																					X		X					Wooded Tract (Olmsted Park)	

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The Parks Department has also acquired and built a new playground in the Hispanic-dominated sub-neighborhood of Hyde Square. The new Forbes Street Playground is a playlot that serves this dense section of the neighborhood with lower household incomes and therefore less opportunity to access far-from-home recreation. The playlot was secured through a transfer of city lots and the purchase of a private lot, thanks to the Mayor's Open Space Acquisition Fund.

Assessment

Jamaica Plain

Like Hyde Park, Jamaica Plain has many acres of open space – but it also has a more diverse palette of open space types. Along with the squares, play fields, courts and natural areas, Jamaica Plain also has such features as historic landscape parks (Olmsted Park and Jamaica Pond), a living woody plant “museum” (Arnold Arboretum), and linked parkland with off-road bicycle paths (in the Emerald Necklace and the DCR Southwest Corridor Park). The city's largest park, Franklin Park (473 acres), borders the neighborhood's southeast section. In addition, there are twenty community gardens in Jamaica Plain.

In 1996, the Boston Parks Department acquired six acres of the Bussey Brook urban wild (aka the South Street Tract), located between the MBTA Forest Hills station and the Arnold Arboretum. These have been incorporated into the Arboretum. The Department, in cooperation with the Arboretum Park Conservancy, has made pathway and landscaping improvements to this site using federal and state transportation enhancement funds. The Parks Commission has named the pathway for John Blackwell, a member of the Conservancy, a long-time open space advocate, and a guiding force for this project.

ACTIVE RECREATION NEEDS

Active recreation facilities located on land under the jurisdiction of the Parks Department, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Boston School Department are fairly well distributed. The most difficult area to serve for active recreation is the Jamaica Hills residential area southwest of Jamaica Pond and west of the Arnold Arboretum. However, most homes in this area have backyards, and this area is near Jamaica Pond Park, where soccer and softball are played, and Larz Anderson Park in Brookline, a large landscaped park with a children's playground, athletic fields, passive areas, and an outdoor skating rink, partly ameliorating some of the need for public play space. The recent

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capital improvement of existing Parks Department facilities and the presence of active recreation facilities in the DCR Southwest Corridor Park, have helped to cushion the impact of more people using local open space. The Department constructed a play lot on Forbes Street in the dense Hyde Square area. This development was in response to local neighborhood concerns about a shortage of play places for younger children.

However, the need still exists in localized areas for additional playing fields to enable more Jamaica Plain youths, many of whom live in households without auto access, to get a chance to exercise, compete, and strengthen their identity in socially acceptable contexts. One successful improvement in this dense neighborhood has been the effort by the Parks Department to rehabilitate the playing facilities associated with the English High School campus. Artificial turf fields, resurfaced courts and the like have created a vital center of activity for recreation in Jamaica Plain.

Another potential opportunity may become available in the area of the Jackson Square Orange Line station. The BRA, through an RFP, selected a development team for vacant lands near this T stop. The team has received approval from the BRA Board for a proposal that includes passive and active recreation features, including an indoor ice skating/active recreation facility.

OPEN SPACE RISING IN HYDE SQUARE

In recent years the open spaces in the Hyde Square sub-neighborhood have made great strides in fulfilling their potential. The most developed open space here is Jefferson Playground, with a baseball field, two basketball courts, and a play lot. Nira Rock, adjacent to Jefferson, is an urban wild under Parks Department jurisdiction. It contains a Roxbury puddingstone outcropping, a sheer cliff, a meadow, an urban orchard, non-woody erosion control plantings, and other land suitable for community open space uses. (The orchard and erosion control plantings are thanks to the stewardship of Earthworks.) In 1993, prior to its transfer to Parks Department jurisdiction, the site received landscaping enhancements under a Department of Neighborhood Development (DND) project performed by the Boston Natural Areas Network. In the intervening years, it became apparent that further work was needed.

Also adjacent to Jefferson is the BPS Hennigan School complex, with a recently renovated schoolyard. A linked system of open space among these three sites has evolved that provides this underserved district with a variety of experiences: play lot

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equipment, an orchard, and areas for organized and unorganized play in immediate proximity to the school; playing fields and courts at Jefferson; and a path to link the Hennigan School to Nira Rock for schoolchildren to safely use the urban wild as an environmental resource.

Thanks to City capital funds and a state Urban Self-Help grant, Jefferson Playground has benefited from a recent re-design and re-construction project. In conjunction with outside funding, connections from Jefferson to Nira Rock were made, helping to achieve a linked open space vision.

These open space improvements that have occurred so far have complemented three developments in the Hyde Square area: the upgrading of residential structures and open space at the Bromley-Heath BHA housing complex, the scattered-site affordable housing project spearheaded by the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation with the help of DND, and the installation of a new neighborhood plaza, the Arcola Park Garden, created through a partnership between DND and the Boston Natural Areas Network. In addition, the open space at the Heath Street rotary has recently been re-designed and made more attractive, further enhancing this area.

While Hyde Square east of Centre Street has Mozart Playground and the Southwest Corridor Park, density here generates further needs, especially for younger children. As mentioned above, the Parks Department built a new play lot in response to community demand on Forbes Street. The land was acquired both by transfer from DND and by purchase of a private parcel with funds from the Mayor's Open Space Acquisition Fund.

ADVANCING CONNECTIVITY

The reconfiguration of Parkman Drive and Prince Street, as recommended in the Emerald Necklace Master Plan, would create significant landscape improvements for Jamaica Pond and help create a better connection between Olmsted Park, Jamaica Pond Park, and the Arborway/Arboretum. Two advances toward that goal have been experienced in the recent past: the installation of bike lanes on Perkins Street through the Connecting Jamaica Pond project jointly funded by the City capital budget and a federal/state transportation enhancement grant; and the advocacy of the Emerald Necklace Greenway concept by BikeBoston, the local chapter of the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition. This concept looks to restore the connectivity that Olmsted had designed into the Emerald Necklace park system.

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Various surface transportation projects in the 20th century have historically weighed the interests of motor vehicles over those of pedestrians and bicyclists. This policy has led to gaps and discontinuities in the Necklace's connectivity. It has become exceedingly difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists to connect from one part of the system to the other, and therefore safety has been compromised. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (a predecessor agency to DCR) awarded a greenway grant to the BikeBoston group for a schematic conceptual study of these gaps and discontinuities, and a public relations campaign to publicize the study's findings. The group developed an educational poster and a special event to increase public awareness of this issue. This group is continuing to work with the community, the public at large, and such public agencies as the DCR to improve the parkway system and other streets to restore its intended multi-modal character. This would restore the parkway system for the benefit of non-motorized transportation and recreation as well as for motorized transportation.

This neighborhood has two model linear/linked park systems: the Emerald Necklace and the Southwest Corridor Park. Both are generally aligned in a north-south orientation. Additional street tree plantings on important east-west cross streets would strengthen the open space character of the neighborhood and provide a visual connection between these park systems. This concept will be most fully realized when a federal/state transportation enhancements-funded project, "Connecting the Corridors," connects the Emerald Necklace and the Southwest Corridor Park in the Fenway-Roxbury area. This project will improve the streetscape and provide a bike lane connecting these two corridors. Recent tree plantings along Centre Street, between Bromley-Heath and the Monument, and on Washington Street, from Egleston Square to Forest Hills, have helped to advance this open space connection concept.

These two major linear park systems meet at the Forest Hills T station area. The BRA and BTD are working together to plan for traffic improvements in the Forest Hills area as part of the MBTA's interest in disposing of its vacant properties in the area for redevelopment. The Parks Department is participating as an advocate for open space interests. One area of agreement is the sense that this meeting of these park corridors provides an opportunity to extend the corridors southward via Washington Street and Hyde Park Avenue to Roslindale and Hyde Park, respectively. These continuations would likely be bike routes on these thoroughfares, considering the existing land uses.

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With more intensive development pressures and the ongoing need for more linear, resource-based recreation opportunities, another look would be advisable at an idea that may have been ahead of its time. The Charles-to-Charles Corridor concept was promoted in the 1970s as a way to link and protect open spaces in Jamaica Plain, Brookline, and Newton. It begins at the Charlesgate section of the Emerald Necklace system, going south to Jamaica Pond Park, and then westward via land purchases, easements, conservation restrictions, and other agreements through a series of undeveloped parcels in Jamaica Plain, Brookline, and Newton, reaching to protected open spaces on the Charles River. The development of Millennium Park in West Roxbury provides another impetus for this concept, as it provides a significant destination at the western end of the proposed corridor. This corridor would provide another opportunity for users of the Emerald Necklace, and make Millennium Park and the other public lands along the Charles more accessible.

CLEANING THE MUDDY

Another avenue for open space improvement is less immediately visible but is nonetheless vital to the neighborhood's and the city's environmental health. The Muddy River, the waterway connecting Jamaica Pond to the Charles River, has had poor water quality for many years. Heavy flooding along the Muddy in the fall of 1996 and several subsequent flooding incidents caused significant damage to residences and institutions in several downstream Boston neighborhoods.

After numerous study reports that recommended a variety of strategies to clean up the river, a consensus has developed for dredging as an acceptable resolution to the problem of the already accumulated sediment in the river bed. In the first instance, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority has completed a sewer separation project in the Stony Brook watershed – primarily in Jamaica Plain – in conjunction with the Boston Water and Sewer Commission as a means to address the ongoing combined sewer overflow (CSO) discharges to the Back Bay Fens.

A new ambitious project for dredging the Muddy River and restoring the historic landscape is about to begin construction. City of Boston and Town of Brookline officials have teamed up with the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to plan and design, with the US Army Corps of Engineers, this environmental restoration and flood control project. The particulars are further discussed in the

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Emerald Necklace section (Section 7.3.3). While it will be several years before the project is completed, the results will be well worth waiting for. The good water quality at Jamaica Pond has attracted people for fishing, sailing, and rowing. Such increased use can be expected for Olmsted Park – the site of Ward’s Pond, Willow Pond, and Leverett Pond – once the Muddy River’s water quality is improved.

RESTORING EMERALD WOODLANDS

Another goal of the Emerald Necklace Master Plan is the restoration and improvement of the woodlands of the Emerald Necklace. In Jamaica Plain, the woodlands are found in Olmsted Park and Jamaica Pond Park. (Franklin Park is discussed in both the Roxbury section and in the Emerald Necklace chapter in the Open Space Systems Management section [Section 7.3.3].)

The Parks Department has undertaken an initiative to restore the woodlands in the Emerald Necklace. This effort has been partly aided by several factors: the demolition of the DCR skating rink at Willow Pond Road and the Jamaica way; the construction of a boardwalk and pathway around Ward’s Pond; the rehabilitation of the bridge and cove on the Boston side of Leverett Pond in Olmsted Park; the creation of a bike/pedestrian path system along the Brookline side of Olmsted Park; and the restoration of the shoreline and pathways around Jamaica Pond. These factors have brought more users into Jamaica Pond Park and Olmsted Park, and more awareness of the deteriorated state of its woodlands and the need for restoration.

The Parks Department released a report in 2000 on the woodlands initiative. A draft Olmsted Park woodlands restoration plan has been developed by the Emerald Necklace Conservancy (ENC) with support from the state. Fundraising is underway to implement its recommendations.

STRENGTHENING EXISTING FACILITIES

The primary theme in open space-rich Jamaica Plain is a strengthening of existing facilities, including those owned by the state. The DCR’s Southwest Corridor Park is now 15 years old and community concerns are mounting as to the ability of the state, with its highly constrained budget, to adequately maintain this park system.

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The DCR recently demolished the deteriorated Kelly Rink and restored its Olmsted Park site across from Daisy Field to greenspace. A temporary outdoor rink has been built by DCR in the Jackson Square section of Jamaica Plain.

Given the level of investment, the number of residents dependent upon local open space, and the ability of these open space facilities to knit this diverse community together, maintenance of these DCR facilities should remain a priority. Perhaps partnerships could be developed with the private sector as the area is redeveloped. For example, the relatively new Stop & Shop supermarket on Centre Street near the Bromley-Heath BHA development and the Jackson Square MBTA station may be a good fit with the Southwest Corridor Park in general, and a new indoor skating rink to be developed nearby. The new Jackson Square transit-oriented development project may also produce potential partners for the Southwest Corridor Park.

Another approach to strengthening existing facilities is to look for synergies among the facilities, i.e., ways to work together to make the whole group greater than the sum of the parts. An example here is the proposed "Green Triangle." The proximity of environmentally-oriented attractions like the Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain, the Franklin Park Zoo in Roxbury, and the Boston Nature Center in Mattapan has led, in the past, to discussions on a conceptual strategy of joint development and marketing to attract visitors to this area. The involved parties mentioned above, the Parks Department, other neighboring owners and users, and the Boston Redevelopment Authority will need to consult with each other as they take this promising concept to the next level of discussion.

Mission Hill

The green space woven into the fabric of the Mission Hill neighborhood, once largely in the form of privately and institutionally owned land, is a distinctive and important attribute. Open space has contributed to the fabric of the neighborhood as institutional campuses, smaller vacant lots, and steeply sloping hillsides. Some of this space has begun to be developed for either institutional expansion or housing.

Connections between open space properties exist due largely to the urban wilds and other non-public lands. The greatest challenge will be protection of such non-publicly owned open space.

Needs Analysis

MISSION HILL WILDS

Urban wilds constitute 15 acres in Mission Hill of which only 5.3 acres are protected to assure their preservation and continued public access. There are concerns regarding private land that is open to development. In the 1980s housing took eight acres on the back of Mission Hill. Due to housing needs, other residential developments are proposed. Possible institutional expansion poses additional concerns.

Some of these concerns have been resolved in recent times. The New England Baptist Hospital has put a permanent conservation easement held by the Boston Conservation Commission on the Parker Hilltop urban wild, and a temporary (40-year) conservation easement on the Iroquois Woods urban wild.

The One Brigham Circle proposal has become the most promising example of resolving the conflict between institutional interests and open space preservation in Mission Hill. The 6.6-acre wooded Harvard Quarry/Ledge urban wild has spectacular views of downtown Boston and the Harbor in an otherwise highly dense urban neighborhood. The developer selected by Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services for a mixed office/commercial development reserved 6.85 acres of the total site for a combination neighborhood park and urban wild now known as Kevin Fitzgerald Park. The developer provided funding for the development of open space improvements such as gates, fences, lawns, paths, and benches. The Edward Ingersoll Browne Fund provided additional funding for a decorative gateway and landscaping improvements for the entrance that is oriented to the neighborhood. A City of Boston Small Changes grant funded signage for the site. A 14,000-square foot public plaza is located at the Tremont Street side of this office/commercial development to enhance the Brigham Circle area and Huntington Avenue/Avenue of the Arts as the northern gateway to Mission Hill.

MISSION HILL PARKS

There are two sizable parks, McLaughlin and Mission Hill (aka Sheehy-Smith), and a small playground, Gibbons (aka Delle Avenue) in this neighborhood. The Emerald Necklace, specifically the narrow southern end of the Riverway, borders the neighborhood on its western edge. The Riverway is not easy to reach from Mission Hill due to the heavily trafficked Riverway parkway, except at Route 9. The northern end of Olmsted Park is

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also accessible to Mission Hill residents via Route 9. The Southwest Corridor Park runs just outside the planning district boundary along its eastern flank, and provides access to another regional bike/pedestrian path.

The three neighborhood parks provide a variety of active and passive recreation facilities. McLaughlin is in good condition. The wooded section has been improved recently, thanks to collaborative efforts of neighbors, the Parks Department urban wild program, and Earthworks, a locally-based environmental group. A recently completed capital project, funded with both City capital funds and the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, built pathways and gateways along the southern side of the park, making this side of the park more inviting.

Both the city capital budget and a grant from the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (jointly administered by DCS/EOEA and NPS/DOI) funded rehabilitation of the ball field (bottom tier) at Mission Hill Playground (formerly Sheehy-Smith) in the mid-1990s. A few years ago, the rehabilitation of the middle tier of Mission Hill Playground was supported by both the city capital budget and grants from the federal Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program (UPARR) and the Edward Ingersoll Browne Fund. Rehabilitation efforts will continue for the Emerald Necklace.

THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Jamaica Plain

With the revival of Jamaica Pond Park and its many other parks, Jamaica Plain has been well served by the City's capital improvement program. With the DCR Southwest Corridor Park and the city's own Emerald Necklace, Jamaica Plain is well endowed with regional open space on each of its eastern and western flanks. However, underserved sub-areas do exist. Areas with urban wilds and scenic areas like Nira Rock and Hellenic Hill should be targets of planning efforts.

Community involvement in its open spaces is a key theme in Jamaica Plain, as is the maintenance and improvement of existing facilities. In accordance with guidelines in the master plans, the Emerald Necklace north of the Arboretum will continue to be a major target for rehabilitation (see also the chapter on the Emerald Necklace).

Opportunities

ADVANCING CONNECTIVITY

- Create linkages/greenways between the Southwest Corridor and the Emerald Necklace at major cross streets, particularly those where MBTA Orange Line stops are located. Use as a potential model the ISTEAF-funded project Connecting the Corridors in the Fenway/Roxbury area, which will enhance Forsyth Street to connect the Southwest Corridor and the Emerald Necklace.
- Make more bicycle-friendly major thoroughfares such as Centre Street, South Street, and Washington Street. Work with the BRA and BTD to improve connections between the Emerald Necklace and Southwest Corridors in this area, and to extend bike routes from this area southward to Roslindale Square and Cleary Square (Hyde Park).
- Support a coordinated effort by DCR and MBTA legal and real estate management staffs to transfer ownership of the Southwest Corridor Park lands from the MBTA to the DCR.

NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

- Prepare a Jamaica Plain component to the citywide urban wilds/natural areas plan. Work with the Appalachian Mountain Club, Boston Conservation Commission, Boston Natural Areas Network, Earthworks, and Massachusetts Audubon Society to protect and make more accessible the urban wilds and natural areas in this neighborhood.

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CLEANING THE MUDDY

- Continue to keep the Muddy River restoration from Ward's Pond to the Back Bay Fens (including dredging) as the highest priority of the Parks Department and the City of Boston. Support the construction of the agreed-upon plan.

STRENGTHENING EXISTING FACILITIES

- Continue implementing the recommendations of the Emerald Necklace Master Plan for Jamaica Pond, Olmsted Park, and the Riverway.
- Work with the DCR to restore the former DCR Rink site in Olmsted Park to its historic landscape as a restored pond/meadow area in accordance with the Emerald Necklace Master Plan.
- Work with the Arnold Arboretum to assure that City and community interests are represented in the implementation of their master plan. Monitor the Institutional Master Plan revision to insure that future developments are consistent with the intent of the partnership with the Parks Department.
- Continue to fund capital rehabilitation of City park facilities in the capital renewal cycle as needed, such as at Rossmore-Stedman, Brewer-Burroughs, the South Street Mall, and Jamaica Pond.

Community Priorities

ACTIVE RECREATION NEEDS

- Recognize that additional fields for active team sports (baseball, softball, soccer, and football) are a high priority need, higher even than play lots for younger children. Support the reconstruction of school yards as needed for community youth recreation uses.
- Explore establishing additional play lots in certain underserved sub-neighborhoods such as Hyde Square and Egleston Square.
- Support the BRA/DCR's search for a permanent skating rink site in Jackson Square and determine its adaptability for year-round uses, such as roller-skating and street hockey.

NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

- Work with the BRA to protect natural resource-based open space. Support the requirements of the Conservation Protection Subdistricts created by Article 55, Section 13 of the City of Boston Zoning Code.

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- Enforce the city dog ordinance (leash law; dog waste removal) in all parks and open spaces, but also examine the possibility of off-leash areas and hours in parks based on compliance with waste removal. Spread awareness of the finding of a Boston Water and Sewer Commission (BWSC) study that dog waste is responsible for a high degree of bacterial contamination of stormwater (which drains into Jamaica Pond and the Muddy River).
- Reduce mowing on the fringes of Daisy Field as it abuts Leverett Pond Woods, and along the shoreline of Leverett Pond to buffer the woodlands and the Pond from erosion and fertilizer impacts.

RESTORING EMERALD WOODLANDS

- Support the Emerald Necklace Woodlands Program with increased fundraising through private and public sources.

STRENGTHENING EXISTING FACILITIES

- Continue making maintenance of existing facilities the highest priority. Continue the high standard of ballfield maintenance.
- Continue to improve Franklin Park, with an emphasis on making it a regional park of citywide appeal in accord with master plan recommendations. (See also the chapter on the Emerald Necklace and Roxbury.) Continue to develop the Franklin Park plans for woodlands, transportation and access, and events management.
- Improve the Forest Hills Street boundary of Franklin Park with more attractive fencing and gates.
- Control the flooding of Sunset Pool and Ellicott Brook in Franklin Park.
- Work with the State Police and Boston Police to control drug-related activities along the Southwest Corridor Park, particularly between the Green and Stony Brook T stations along the Lamartine Street side of the park.
- Improve the maintenance of the playlot at Brewer-Burroughs.
- Work with DCR to make even safer crossing the Jamaicaaway to access Jamaica Pond Park.

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Mission Hill

There are opportunities for combined efforts among city agencies, community groups, and property owners, including institutions and developers, to protect open space and provide additional open space. Institutional open space access needs to be encouraged. Urban wilds will continue to need maintenance and protection. Better linkages should be sought between the neighborhood and the Emerald Necklace.

Opportunities

MISSION HILL PARKS

- Create partnerships to encourage continued public access and recreational use of institutional open space including urban wilds. Use the New England Baptist Hospital maintenance agreement for McLaughlin Playground as a model to foster other cooperative agreements with institutions.
- Continue to implement projects to restore Olmsted Park and the Riverway, focusing on improved community access, awareness, and woodland management, as stated in the Emerald Necklace Master Plan. Continue to support the clean-up of the Muddy River.
- Preserve the improvements to the wooded slope of McLaughlin Playground by balancing current needs such as security, access for all, preservation of the historic landscape, and maintenance of vegetation. Continue to work with Earthworks and the neighbors on this natural area.
- Work with the BRA and the community to develop a plan for the identification, protection, and enhancement of open space in Mission Hill. Unify and strengthen the system of existing and potential open space and natural areas by including pedestrian connections throughout the neighborhood and with the Riverway, Olmsted Park, the MBTA Green and Orange Line connections, the Hyde Square sub-system (Nira Rock urban wild, Jefferson Playground, and the Hennigan School grounds), and the Longwood area. Focus on gateways, thoroughfares, streetscapes, edges, and buffers in the urban design aspects of this plan.
- Support a coordinated effort by DCR and MBTA legal and real estate management staffs to transfer ownership of the Southwest Corridor Park lands from the MBTA to the DCR.

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Community Priorities

MISSION HILL WILDS

- Implement the woodlands management plan for the Back of the Hill. Continue the maintenance that has recently been achieved through the Parks Department's urban wilds initiative.
- Develop the Parker Hilltop urban wild (aka "the fourth tier" of McLaughlin Playground) as a passive-oriented natural area. Hold a charrette on the future design of this permanently protected natural area.

MISSION HILL PARKS

- Investigate developing a network using "paper streets" for increased access to McLaughlin Playground. Look especially at Judge, Darling, Oswald, Wait, and Hayden Streets, and the public stairs as well as the old reservoir stairs between 141 and 143 Fisher Avenue.
- Foster park programming at McLaughlin. Expand the Park Partnership of the Friends of McLaughlin to include events and programming activities.
- Integrate the adjacent community gardens into Tobin Community Center programs.
- Support organizing Park Partners for parks that do not already have friends groups.
- Work with property owners and the city to implement a vacant lot clean-up program.